

IN THE CLAIMS

1. (Previously Presented) For a tractor equipped with a loader bucket, a hinge assembly for hinging a tractor hood on a tractor body so as to enable the hood to open upwardly and backwardly from the front end of the tractor, the hinge assembly comprising a double-rocker, four-link mechanism, including a hood-mounted bracket comprising one link, the hood-mounted bracket being mounted to an underside of the tractor hood, near a back end of the tractor hood;

wherein the double-rocker, four-link mechanism includes a lower, fixed link having a first end and a second end, an upper, coupler link being said one link of the hood-mounted bracket and having a first end and a second end, a front rocker link and a back rocker link, said front rocker link having a lower end connected pivotally to said first end of the fixed link and an upper end connected pivotally to said first end of the coupler link, said back rocker link having a lower end connected pivotally to said second end of the fixed link and an upper end connected pivotally to said second end of the coupler link;

wherein the front, back, and coupler links are displaceable so that the upper end of the back link is movable toward and away from the lower end of the front link, between positions on opposite sides of a line drawn from the lower end of the back link to the first end of the coupler link.

2. (Previously Presented) The hinge assembly of claim 1, wherein the first and second ends of the lower, fixed link are each defined by a body bracket mounted to the tractor body.

3. (Original) The hinge assembly of claim 2, wherein the rocker links are comprised of a comparatively longer, front link and a comparatively shorter, back link and wherein the coupler link is the shortest link.

4. (Canceled)

5. (Previously Presented) For a tractor equipped with a loader bucket, a hinge assembly for hinging a tractor hood on a tractor body so as to enable the hood to open upwardly and backwardly from the front end of the tractor, the hinge assembly comprising a double-rocker, four-link mechanism, including a hood-mounted bracket comprising one link, the hood-mounted bracket being mounted to an underside of the tractor hood, near a back end of the tractor hood;

wherein the double-rocker, four-link mechanism includes a lower, fixed link having two opposite ends, each defined by a body bracket mounted to the tractor body, an upper, coupler link being said one link of the hood-mounted bracket and having two opposite ends, and two rocker links, each rocker link having a lower end connected pivotally to one of the opposite ends of the fixed link and each rocker link having an upper end connected pivotally to one of the opposite ends of the coupler link;

wherein the rocker links are comprised of a comparatively longer, front link and a comparatively shorter, back link and wherein the coupler link is the shortest link;

wherein the front, back, and coupler links are displaceable so that the upper end of the back link is movable toward and away from the lower end of the front link, between positions on opposite sides of a line drawn from the lower end of the back link to the first end of the coupler link; and

further comprising an extensible-retractable spring connected between the rocker links so as to bias the upper end of the back link toward the lower end of the front link.

6. (Previously Presented) A hinge assembly for hinging a hood on a utility vehicle body so as to enable the hood to open upwardly and backwardly from the front end of the utility vehicle, the hinge assembly comprising a double-rocker, four-link mechanism, including a bracket comprising one link, the bracket being mounted to an underside of the hood, near a back end of the hood;

wherein the double-rocker, four-link mechanism includes a lower, fixed link having two opposite ends, each defined by a bracket mounted to the utility vehicle body, an upper, coupler link defined by a portion of the hood-mounted bracket and having two opposite ends, and two rocker links, each rocker link having a lower end connected pivotally to one of the opposite ends of the fixed link and each rocker link having an upper end connected pivotally to one of the opposite ends of the coupler link;

wherein the rocker links are comprised of a comparatively longer, front link and a comparatively shorter, back link and wherein the coupler link is the shortest link;

wherein the front, back, and coupler links are displaceable so that the upper end of the back link is movable toward and away from the lower end of the front link, between positions on opposite sides of a line drawn from the lower end of the back link to the first end of the coupler link;

and comprising an extensible-retractable spring connected between the rocker links so as to bias the upper end of the back link toward the lower end of the front link;

wherein the spring has a front end connected pivotally to the front link and a back end connected pivotally to the back link and wherein, as measured along the front and back links respectively, the front end of the spring is comparatively closer to the lower end of the front link and the back end of the spring is comparatively farther from the lower end of the back link.

7. (Canceled)

8. (Canceled)

9. (Canceled)

10. (Canceled)

11. (Currently Amended) The hinge assembly of claim 6, wherein the hinge hood-mounted bracket is secured adhesively to the underside of the hood.

12. (Currently Amended) The hinge assembly of claim 11, wherein the hood is made from a polymeric material and wherein the ~~hinge~~ hood-mounted bracket is made from steel.

13. (Currently Amended) The hinge assembly of claim 6, wherein the hood is composed of vacuum-formed polypropylene and said ~~hinge~~ hood-mounted bracket is composed of steel, which is secured adhesively to the hood.

14. (Previously Presented) The hinge assembly of claim 6 wherein said utility vehicle comprises a tractor equipped with a front end loader bucket.

15. (Currently Amended) The hinge assembly of claim 1, wherein the ~~hinge~~ hood-mounted bracket is secured adhesively to the hood and the hood is composed of a polymeric material and wherein the ~~hinge~~ hood-mounted bracket is composed of metal.

16. (New) The hinge assembly of claim 1, wherein the hood-mounted bracket is secured adhesively to the underside of the hood.

17. (New) The hinge assembly of claim 1, wherein the hood is composed of vacuum-formed polypropylene and said hood-mounted bracket is composed of steel, which is secured adhesively to the hood.

18. (New) The hinge assembly of claim 5, wherein the hood-mounted bracket is secured adhesively to the underside of the hood.

19. (New) The hinge assembly of claim 18, wherein the hood is made from a polymeric material and wherein the hood-mounted bracket is made from steel.

20. (New) The hinge assembly of claim 5, wherein the hood is composed of vacuum-formed polypropylene and said hood-mounted bracket is composed of steel, which is secured adhesively to the hood.